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Andrew Adair was shocked to learn that getting an education in Afghanistan was, and still is, a struggle for girls.

Females were forbidden to attend school under Taliban rule. Although the Taliban was overthrown in 2001, allowing females to openly attend schools, the necessary supplies for learning are hard to find, said Adair, Stevenson High School's student body president and a member of the Student Leadership Advisory Board.

The advisory board, which includes students from Highland Park, Lake Forest, Stevenson and Vernon Hills high schools, meets regularly with U.S. Rep. Mark Kirk, R-10th, of Highland Park, to pursue service projects. When the board learned of a school in Kabul that had only one chalkboard and one piece of chalk for 7,000 female students, they knew they had to help.

They wrote letters of encouragement and sent gifts, including school supplies, to Miriam High School, which had not accepted females between 1996 and 2001. Kirk delivered the gifts earlier this month.

"If you look at the way things have gone in Afghanistan, it just seems like a rough place," Adair, a senior from Buffalo Grove said. "Their learning is hindered because they don't have basic school supplies."

Max Guggenheim, senior class president at Highland Park High School, said not being able to go to school is a foreign concept hard for many students to understand.

"No one should be denied an education," he said. "I think it's great what's starting to happen for them."

In his letter to the female students, he encouraged them to take full advantage of their education and told them more supplies are on the way. In addition to pens, pencils, and notebooks, students sent old textbooks.

"And we sent them pounds and pounds of paper," Guggenheim said.

Adair said the situation in Afghanistan makes him realize how good he has it here, especially being able to attend a school like Stevenson. Seeing wastefulness of school supplies bothers him now, but he's hoping to turn that into a positive for female students in Afghanistan.

It's not uncommon for students to use just five pages in a notebook before discarding it, he said. He'd like to encourage his fellow students to donate those unused notebooks to the Afghan students, who can use them.

"We're just getting started," he said.